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ABSTRACT

The development of personal and professional identity in deans of nursing programs is identified through the collection and analysis of their own life stories. Understanding the development of personal characteristics and professional behaviors is important for their successful leadership. The main research question was: What life/career experiences and relationships do deans of nursing programs identify as significant factors in their pathways to the deanship? A theoretical framework was built using past literature. The study research design, population and sampling, data collection methods, and data analysis are reported. The six participants in the life history interviews identified the following four major domains as important in their life/career pathways: significant others; educaional experiences; occupational experiences; and personal events. The major themes associated with the life/career pathways were: a strong valuing of education and achievement; a pattern of female-female relationships which gave them role models, support, and information; and a pattern of early leadership behavior which included an enjoyment of being, or desire to be, in charge. Conclusions are the following: the Erikson-Levinson model was generally descriptive of the women studied; people and relationships were very important in their lives and careers; early socialization experiences and relationships contributed to a development of leadership behaviors and strong ego development; and through early family and educational experiences, they developed strong values related to importance of achievement and education. Implications for parents, educators, and further research are noted. Contains 42 references. (SM)

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DEANS OF NURSING: PATHWAYS TO THE DEANSHIP

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Purpose

A purpose of this study was to identify the development of personal and professional identity in deans* of nursing programs through the collection and analysis of their own life stories. This study was important because there is a need to understand the development of personal characteristics and professional behaviors needed for successful leadership in nursing education administrators (Lewis, 1981).

Research Question

The major research question was: What life/career experiences and relationships do deans of nursing programs identify as significant factors in their pathways to the deanship?

Theoretical Framework

Developmental theories provide a valid background for examining and understanding the formation of individual and subsequent career identities. Therefore, the theoretical frameworks which guided this inquiry were Erikson's theory of ego development (Erikson, 1950/1963) and Levinson's theory of adult development (Levinson, 1978). Both theories were used because one theory builds on the other and neither alone provided a total framework for looking at the dean's pathway to the deanship.

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*Dean, director, division head or chairman of an N.L.N. accredited, four-year generic baccalaureate and higher degree program in the United States.

Erikson's (1950/1963) framework was used to link the people, relationships, events, and experiences of the deans' childhood to their adulthood qualities, i.e., trust, autonomy, initiative, and industry.

According to Erikson, males and females reach adolescence after at least partially resolving the same sequence of developmental tasks. It is at this point male and female developmental models diverge and male adolescents confront identity issues prior to intimacy issues, while for female adolescents, the identity and intimacy tasks are fused within the same developmental stage. Erikson (1964, 1968) asserts that this divergence is due to biological difference in women's "inner space", which has a shaping effect on the way she views herself, her world, and her relationships with others. This, then, makes the intimacy stage a necessary companion to identity achievement (Gilligan, 1982). Barnett and Baruch (1978) state that the implications of Erikson's theory are that, "Women, but not men, require a spouse before they can complete as crucial a task as identity formation; not marrying implies not establishing one's identity" (p. 189).

With this background, a model which expanded Erikson's (1968) earlier thinking to be more consistent with women's contemporary experience was sought. Morgan and Farber (1982) suggested a reformulation of Erikson's theory to emphasize the interaction of the psychosocial in female identity development. Their view took into account the "profound changes in values regarding the appropriate roles for men and women within our

society" (1982, p. 203). Their reformulation seemed more consistent with Erikson's (1968) original thinking as his theory of female identity development represented a departure from his view in other developmental stages, i.e., the interaction of the biological, social, and psychological factors in the resolution of the particular developmental crisis.

According to Morgan and Farber (1982) the components of women's identity (self-definition, women's occupation, and world view) were largely determined in the past by the men to whom the woman was married. They argue that today's woman may achieve identity, like men, through resolution of the previous developmental crises and through occupational, philosophical, and historical choices that the women makes. The foundation of their views is laid in earlier work by Marcia on identity formation first in 1966 with male subjects and later validated with women (Marcia & Friedman, 1970; Fannin, 1979).

Morgan and Farber (1982) point out that the original mother-daughter identifications may involve traditional models for women of marriage and motherhood. Therefore, women who espouse non-traditional values require strong female identifications derived from their current environments to counterbalance the original mother-daughter identifications. In addition, the interpersonal relationships which these women experience must include some which are congruent with their emerging identities. These relationships are necessary to provide validation (particularly during adolescence and young adulthood) of their plans for occupational careers outside the home and the incorporation of

behavioral characteristics like assertiveness, risk taking, etc., which in the past may have been considered inappropriate for women. Morgan and Farber (1982) re-emphasize the importance of friendships with female peers who are nurturant and ego-supportive to them and allow them to grow as individuals. As suggested by other writers (Bardwick, 1979; Bernikow, 1980; Brenton, 1974), this is necessary for women adopting a non-traditional identity.

Levinson

The use of Levinson's theory with women has been criticized because it was developed from research done exclusively on men. Levinson (1978) recognized this as a problem and invited others to test his theory in the study of women's development. Specific concerns about using Levinson's theory in the study of women fall into two categories: (1) Women differ from men in their development because they tend to define themselves in the context of human relations and their capacity to care rather than in terms of more external variables like success, money, etc. (Gilligan, 1982; Hancock, 1985); and (2) The stage of a women's development is tied directly to the stage of the family life cycle (Barnett & Baruch, 1978; Ellicott, 1985; Rossi, 1980).

Despite what were considered powerful arguments, the fact that there was not a comprehensive theory of women's development available, limited choice. At least 30 research studies were found that used Levinson's theory with women. Those that studied career women were supportive of Levinson's concepts of adult development (Cherry, 1981; Dicicco, 1982; Droege, 1982;

Furst, 1983; Gordon, 1983; Kimmelman, 1986; Kitchen, 1984; Missiram, 1980; Ogilvy, 1984; Quinn, 1980; Stewart, 1977; Zubrod, 1980).

Research Design

One purpose of this study was to describe and understand, though the lens of developmental theory, deans' perspectives on the people, relationships, events, and experiences that were important in their life/career pathways to the nursing deanship. Accordingly, the research design was naturalistic, and was aimed at discovering developmental phenomena as manifest in the deans' lives. The design was also retrospective in the sense that present deans were asked to recall what was important in their pasts.

Population and Sampling

The population was the 372 (1987) deans of National League for Nursing accredited, four-year generic baccalaureate and higher degree programs in the United States. A sample of 53 deans was identified by selecting the first 25 of the "top schools of nursing" (Chamings, 1984; Hayter, 1982) in one category and 28 deans from a more accessible population who had similar personal and professional characteristics and who came from similar institutions in another category. Deans were surveyed and asked to indicate their willingness to participate in life history interviews. Of the 29 who responded, 13 deans expressed their willingness to be interviewed. A judgment sub-sample of six was selected based on the following planned characteristics: the first three to respond in each category

that represented different age cohorts (40, 50, 60) and different organizations (public, private).

A judgment was made that there might be differences in the life/career experiences of deans who (a) ultimately chose to manage a private versus a public institution and (b) were in different age cohorts. One dean in the following age cohorts; 40s, 50s, and 60s, was selected in each category. No dean was over 63 at the time of the interview. Within each sub-sample there were individual unplanned variations among deans--three had doctoral degrees in nursing or nursing education, and three had doctoral degrees in higher education or administration. There was one dean from a religiously affiliated school. One dean represented an ethnic minority and was responsible for a predominantly black school and three deans were Fellows in the American Academy of Nursing. Deans were selected that reflected as many contrasts as possible so that life/career patterns that emerged as common might have more validity.

Data Collection Methods

Data collection methods reported here include a protocol for life history interviews, a document search of curriculum vitae, and the investigator's introspections (as recorded in the field notes).

The life history interview protocol was pilot tested on an assistant dean to refine the interview questions and to validate the amount of time necessary to do the life review. Interviews were done in two 2-hour sessions and were tape recorded. Follow-

up interviews were done approximately nine months later after the typed life history had been returned to the dean. The purpose of the follow-up interview was to: (1) determine the accuracy of the life history as written in the dean's own words; (2) ask further questions that had been raised during the data analysis; and (3) determine agreement on the life/career patterns identified in the life history data to increase the internal validity of the results.

Data Analysis

Established ethnographic procedures as described by Spradley (1979) were applied to the interview and document data. These were: (1) Domain analysis which identified categories or "units of meaning" to the participants; (2) Taxonomic analysis which identified smaller categories or sub-domains representing similarities of items within a domain; (3) Componential analysis which looked for differences between items and across domains; (4) Thematic analysis which identified themes or according to Spradley (1979) "cognitive principles" which connected the domains.

Summary of Findings

The six participants in the life history interviews identified four major domains as important in their life/career pathways: (1) significant others, (2) educational experiences, (3) occupational experiences, and (4) personal events. The attributes of each of these domains were also identified.

The study revealed four major themes associated with the life career pathways of deans of nursing programs.

1. A strong valuing by the participants of (a) education and (b) achievement.

These values of education and achievement were espoused by their parents, who were committed to education for their daughters, whether or not they themselves were highly educated. Some parents were self-educated, through reading and individual inquiry. Parents were models of achievement and hard work and held responsible occupational positions. These values also were reinforced by significant others like neighbors, teachers, advisors, coaches, physicians, and for one, even a college president during her young adulthood.

The importance of achievement and education supports the previous research and writing on women (Auster & Auster, 1981; Chusmir, 1983; Diamond, 1978; Hennig & Jardim, 1978).

2. A pattern of female-female relationships which provided the deans with role modeling of important leadership behaviors, support, encouragement, and information for making educational and career choices.

The importance of other women in the lives of these deans is one of the most significant themes in their life history data. These women with whom they had relationships served as role models. It was from them, as well as parents, that they learned

personal and professional behaviors such as commitment, a work ethic, striving for excellence, sense of humor, risk-taking, intelligence, and commitment to education and scholarly pursuits. Women throughout the deans' lives provided support, encouragement, and information for making educational and occupational choices.

A strong theme of female-female relationships in this study of career women supports Morgan and Farber's (1982) reformulation of Erikson's (1968) theory of female identity during adolescence and young adulthood discussed earlier. The women in the lives of these deans (mothers included) despite whether they were in traditional or non-traditional occupational roles, were highly significant in the development of the deans' personal and professional identity. They were intelligent, assertive, and risk takers who had the courage of their convictions. The women in the development of the deans' professional identity (mostly teachers, advisors, colleagues) took on a "quasi" or "mini-mentoring" role. They were not "true mentors" in the sense described by Riley and Wrench (1985), Vance (1982) and Levinson (1978). However, they provided career modeling, direct support, encouragement and advice. In a few instances, they actually moved the deans along in the organization. Men, for some of the deans, however, took on some of these roles. Fathers played a significant role in the early socialization of five deans. In addition, five of the six women did indicate that other male

figures (physicians, teachers, and administrators) were important to them as either role models or quasi-mentors.

3. A pattern of early leadership behavior which included an enjoyment of/or a desire to be in charge.

Another theme was related to the leadership behavior of the women studied. This theme was the development of early and progressive leadership (for five of the six deans), including liking to be in control or a desire to be in charge. Five of the six deans were involved in leadership beginning in childhood. The sixth dean began to take on leadership positions during Early Adult Transition through her activities in the Student Nurses' Association and management of a sports team. This theme or finding supports Hennig and Jardim's (1978) conclusion that corporate women took leadership roles at an early age.

Conclusions

The conclusions of the study were: (1) the Erikson-Levinson model was generally descriptive of the women studied; (2) people and relationships were extremely important in the lives and the careers of the women studied; (3) the early socialization experiences and relationships of these women contributed to the development of leadership behaviors and positive ego development; (4) through early family and educational experiences and relationships, the participants in this study developed strong values related to the importance of achievement and education.

Implications

This study contributed to the literature on life/career paths of female deans of nursing education programs. Based on what is known about their career paths, the following implications are proposed for parents, educators, and further research.

Parents

Parents who want to provide a broad range of career options for their daughters and promote the development of leadership behaviors must make an effort to create an environment which is receptive to the development of these behaviors. Skills in assertive communication, negotiation, and compromise must be taught, modeled by adults and reinforced as acceptable behavior for girls and women. Team sports and group activities which involve problem solving and team work among both sexes and different age cohorts are recommended.

Educators

Faculty involved in education for nursing leadership provide essential guidance to future nursing leaders. The women in this study were advised, guided, and nurtured by leaders in the past. The next generation must assume responsibility for nurturing our young nursing leaders who show administrative potential. Whether or not mentoring in its popular connotation is either possible or needed remains to be seen. However, some form of career

guidance, advice, and direction from an older and wiser sponsor is necessary. Multiple people filled this need in these women. Programs and networks must be established with this purpose in mind.

Implications for Future Research

Further study of life/career paths of other female nursing executives or leaders is suggested to see if they differ from this study's participants.

The role of mentoring in the development of dean's professional identity is still unclear. Further research in this area needs to be conducted to validate these results with a larger sample. Use of a tool to validate "true mentoring," much like the one used by Riley and Wrench (1985), is recommended.

This study identified the people and relationships that were significant to deans of nursing in their career path. It would be interesting to continue this theme and to identify the people and relationships that are important to the dean in her present position; those that teach, advise, support, and provide validation for her current role.

This study dealt with the aspects of the life-structure that the participants identified as important. Aspects of the life structure related to the individual's socio-cultural world not studied include class, religion, ethnicity, and political systems. Further research that would detail the effects of

social class, religion, and ethnicity on life/career paths of female administrators are recommended.

Finally, further research is recommended which would specifically test Morgan and Farber's (1982) reformulation of Erikson's 1968 theory of female identity development.

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